1·24 The Collector's Magazine

Focus on stamps

Focus

Pixels replace paper

Details from nature

Full steam ahead across Lake Constance

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Chief editors
Florence Herndl, Olga Hammerschmiedova

Art Director / visual concept
Kaspar Eigensatz

Editorial team
Nathalie Stöckli/Minestrone; Larissa Tschudi/SDA/AWP; Florence Herndl; Olga Hammerschmiedova

Layout
Kaspar Eigensatz, Natalie Fankhauser

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Contact Center
Tel.: +41 848 66 55 44
Fax: +41 58 667 62 68
E-mail: stamps@swisspost.ch
Internet: swisspost.ch/stamps

Shop
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printed in **switzerland**

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swisspost.ch/focus-on-stamps-subscription

Photo: ETH-Bibliothek Zürich; Adrian Brand; Loan Schläppi Cover image: each new stamp is archived in the collection database at the Museum of Communication.

175 years in the service of Switzerland

Swiss Post is celebrating its 175th anniversary. To mark this occasion, we are delighted to offer you a new collector's magazine that is more modern, clearer and just as handy.

Philately is a historical cornerstone of our company, producing a bounty of treasures year after year. The stamps reflect our history, our identity and our incredible diversity. Who hasn't been captivated by a beautiful illustration on one of these tiny pieces of paper?

The first issue this year covers a wide variety of themes such as stunning patterns created by nature (page 12), the very first mission of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (page 14) and chess (page 17). You will also learn the results of our competition to find the most beautiful stamp of 2023, which was selected based on your votes (page 20).

The world of philately is of course faced with challenges and opportunities linked to digitization and technology. Do you know how technical advances are used to scan and archive stamps? Historian Nicolas Kessler discusses this delicate (page 8). We ensure that our stamps bridge the gap between the physical and digital worlds. Keep your eyes peeled, and you'll be able to discover yet more hidden virtual worlds by scanning the stamps!

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine and that you have an excellent start to the year.

Thomas Baur
Deputy CEO, Head of Postal Network and Head of the Stamp Commission, Swiss Post.

Stamp from 1850.

1912: the first stamp vending machines are installed in ticket offices in major cities.

Photo: PTT archive, Köniz

175 yellow candles

This is a special year for Swiss Post, as it is celebrating its 175th anniversary. Relive its stamp history in three keywords, and get a sneak peek at two stamps that have been created to mark the occasion.

Connecting

Ever since Swiss Post was founded in 1849, the company has been connecting people and powering a modern Switzerland: forging links between mountains and valleys, villages and cities, different linguistic regions, young and old, work and leisure.

The first stamps were issued by individual cantons in 1843, with federal stamps following in 1850.

Previously the sender's responsibility, letter postage was now paid for by franking. Modestly adorned with the Swiss cross and the symbol of the post horn, the stamps were valid throughout Switzerland, and their value varied by distance.

Young and old alike have used stamps to frank letters and parcels since the postal service was first created, followed by postcards once they were introduced in 1870.

Networking

Over the years, the designs have become ever more diverse. Stamps are miniature works of art that depict history, geography, culture, nature, politics, sports, arts, technology, religion and much more.

Swiss stamps were often issued to support humanitarian causes and charitable organizations, and this continues to be a tradition to this day. Since 1912, for instance, charity stamps for the Pro Juventute foundation (which supports Swiss youth) have been issued almost every year in December. And the Pro Patria charity stamps (in support of Switzerland's tangible and intangible cultural heritage) have been issued annually since 1938. In both cases, the stamp price includes a donation (the surcharge) that is paid to the foundations.

First Pro Patria stamp from 1938.

2004: The Swiss pine wood stamp.

A crypto stamp issued in the 2022 collection.

Two special stamps issued in March

The "175 years Swiss Post" anniversary stamps will be released as an intermediate issue published on 21 March 2024. From that day, the stamps and associated philately products will be available in branches and at postshop.ch. All products will be presented in Focus on stamps 2/2024 on 21 March 2024. Subscribers will receive a delivery with the products from the second issue on 25 April 2024.

Adapting

Swiss stamps have very elaborate designs and are sometimes combined with technological innovations. This is evidenced by world firsts such as the embroidered stamp (2000), the chocolate-scented stamp (2001), the hologram stamp (2002), the Braille stamp (2003), the stamp made of Swiss wood (2004), the campfire-scented stamp (2022) and the stamp containing cement pigment (2023).

In this instant age of AI and digitization, stamps also bridge the gap between the physical and the digital worlds. The first postage stamp to feature a Bee Tag (a 2D code) as a link pointing to the Internet was launched in 2007 – a world premiere. A stamp that combines augmented reality and music for the very first time (created to mark 100 years of SUISA's commitment to fair pay for music composers and publishers) was issued in 2023. Since 2020, Swiss Post has issued a new collection of crypto stamps every year.

3 questions for…

Thomas Baur, Deputy CEO of Swiss Post and Head of PostalNetwork

What message would you like to share to mark the anniversary?

I would like to thank our community of loyal stamp collectors, as well as those who simply enjoy looking at and buying beautiful stamps. Without them, we wouldn't celebrating our 175th anniversary.

Our 175th anniversary will be marked with two stamps in particular. What can we say to pique readers' curiosity?

The anniversary stamps were created thanks to the stamp collection owned by the father of one of the designers. There's no better way of showing how the past can inspire the present to shape the future.

Has any stamp in particular left its mark on you?

A stamp issued in 2016 dedicated to contract children illustrates a dark chapter in Switzerland's recent history. The memory of our history is etched in the stamps. To prevent history from repeating itself, we must not forget.

HELVETIA
100 +50
Fürsorgerische Zwangsmassnahmen und Fremdplatzierungen
Mesures de coercition à des fins d'assistance et placements extrafamiliaux
Misure coercitive a scopo assistenziale e collocamenti extrafamiliari

Take a journey through Swiss Post's history.

swisspost.ch/175-anniversary

559026
CHF 10.00
HELVETIA 100
200 Jahre Schifffahrt auf dem Bodensee
200 ans de navigation sur le lac de Constance
200 anni di navigazione sul Lago di Costanza
200 years boat trips on Lake Constance

Sheetlet of 10 stamps

Ideal stamp for all fans of boat trips – and for Lake Constance voyagers

An invention with oomph

It's 200 years since the first steamboat took to Lake Constance. While the focus was mainly on goods transport at the start, passenger transport became more and more important over time. Join us on a voyage through history.

1824
Maiden voyage: the "Wilhelm" is the first steamship to commence services on Lake Constance, travelling between Romanshorn and Friedrichshafen.

1830
The steamship company for Lake Constance and the Rhine is founded in Constance.

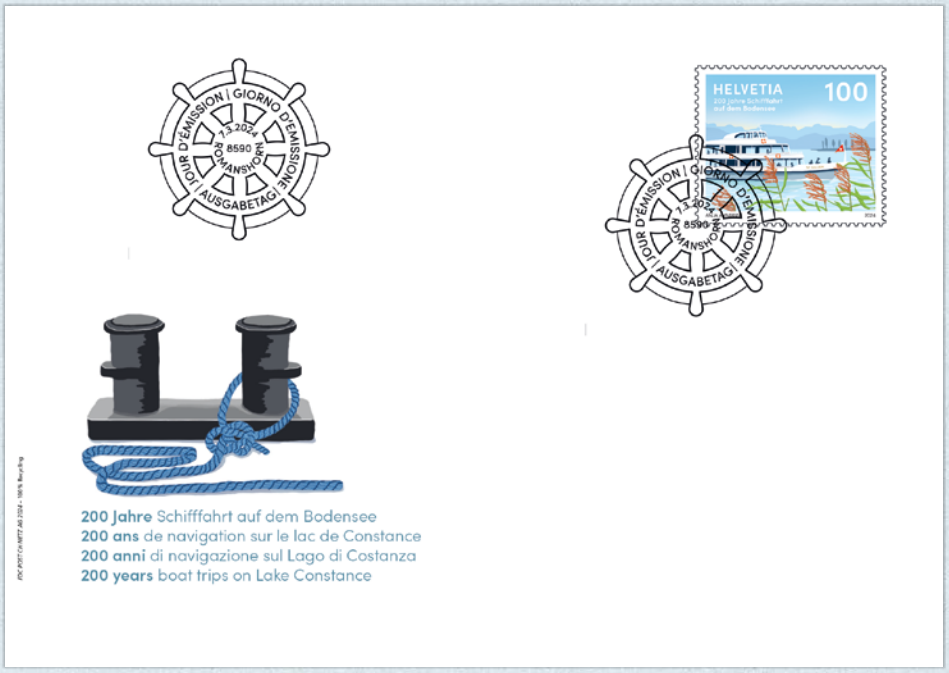
1853
The Swiss Northeastern Railway is founded, offering train ferries on Lake Constance.

1913
First voyage of the most well-known paddle steamer on Lake Constance: the "Hohentwiel", which is still in service today.

1925
The first motor vessel on Lake Constance – the "MS Konstanz" – sets sail.

1928
The opening of the Grand Canal of Alsace enables connections between Lake Constance and the Rhine.

The car ferry between Konstanz and Meersburg commences services.


HELVETIA
100
200 Jahre Schifffahrt auf dem Bodensee
200 ans de navigation sur le lac de Constance
200 anni di navigazione sul Lago di Costanza
200 years boat trips on Lake Constance

Single stamp on first-day cover C6

Products

Stamps

Sheetlet of 10 stamps
★ A519 311 / ⊙ A519 351 / *CHF 10.00*

Single stamp
★ A519 150 / ⊙ A519 550 / *CHF 1.00*

Block of four
★ A519 160 / ⊙ A519 560 / *CHF 4.00*

Covers

Single stamp on first-day cover C6
⊙ A519 580 / *CHF 1.90*

Block of four on first-day cover C6
⊙ A519 630 / *CHF 4.90*

Sheetlet on first-day cover C5
⊙ A519 590 / *CHF 11.20*

Unstamped covers
C6 (162 × 114 mm) / ★ A519 700 / *CHF 0.90*
C5 (229 × 162 mm) / ★ A519 701 / *CHF 1.20*

Folder/collection sheet A5

★ A519 640 / ⊙ A519 650 / *CHF 1.80*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

200 years boat trips on Lake Constance – celebrate with us
On 16 March 2024, an event full of surprises awaits you in the St. Gallen 1 Annahme branch. Swiss Post is organizing an event for collectors, stamp enthusiasts and shipping fans. An exclusive cancellation service with a special cancellation will be offered on-site. The detailed programme is available at swisspost.ch/stamps.

Technical information

Sales
Philately: from 29.2.2024
to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last
Branches: from 7.3.2024
to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last

Validity Unlimited from 7.3.2024

Printing Offset, 4-colour;
Gutenberg AG, Schaan,
Principality of Liechtenstein

Formats Stamp: 33×28 mm
Sheetlet: 192×115 mm
(2 rows of 5 stamps)

Paper White stamp paper,
with optical brightener,
matt gummed, 110 gm²

Perforation 13 ¼ : 13 ½

Design Anja Ammann, La Neuveville

Photos: iStock, Schweizerische Bodensee-Schifffahrt AG

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

2005
The Friedrichshafen–Konstanz catamaran commences services, providing a faster connection between the two towns.

2024
Planned salvage of the steamship "Säntis", which sank in 1931 to a depth of 210 metres.

Fascination and finesse: Nicolas Kessler carefully takes a sheet of cancelled stamps out of an archive drawer.

Pixels replace paper

Stamps are easy to scan, because they're small and flat. So digitization appears to be the ideal solution for protecting them against the ravages of time. But digital archiving comes with its own challenges, as archivist Nicolas Kessler explains.

Copy: Larissa Tschudi Photos: Adrian Brand

For historian Nicolas Kessler, stamps are not only beautiful to look at, they are also valuable historical sources, similar to coins or coats of arms. We meet him at the PTT archive in the town of Köniz, where he works as a research assistant. In his second role as curator for postal history and philately, he and his colleague Nora Haldemann are responsible for the stamp collection at the Museum of Communication in Bern – one of the world's largest and most valuable.

We asked Nicolas Kessler to tell us about the advantages and disadvantages of digital stamp archiving. At first glance, digitization seems like the right solution to saving these precious little images for future generations: you scan them and save the files in a safe place. And that's all there is to it.

"It's not quite as simple as that," says Kessler. Digital photography can indeed be used to immortalize an important part of the stamp: the image. If the scan is good, the "intrinsic value" is safeguarded for the time being – for example, the likeness of Queen Victoria on the stamp, the year the stamp was produced and the original monetary value.

Pitfalls of technology

From a research and collecting perspective, a digital stamp collection also has tangible advantages: the stored image files are easier to organize and can be

“Stamps are not only beautiful to look at, they are also valuable historical sources, similar to coins or coats of arms.”

Nicolas Kessler, historian

In the Museum for Communication: Nicolas Kessler knows a thing or two about digital archiving, for which the historian is jointly responsible as a research assistant in the PTT archive team.

shared with others. And thanks to artificial intelligence, it may one day be possible to search the archives for specific themes or designs – say, a "white horse in the foreground with a tree in the background" – a search that would lead an individual person in an analogue archive to give up in despair.

However, the digital rescue plan is not without its challenges. "There's a great deal of work involved in scanning thousands of stamps. On top of that, these valuable little instruments have many more properties than just the image," explains Kessler. For example, how do you capture a fine watermark cleanly? Or a copperplate print? This is where scanning technology reaches its limits. If you want to scan a watermark, you can illuminate the stamp from behind. But an illuminated stamp looks different from its non-illuminated original. And how can you "scan" a relief, for instance?

Changing technology

Aside from that, digitization itself is subject to change: storage technologies, formats and devices are constantly evolving. Kessler illustrates this challenge with the example of the floppy disk, a data medium that has long since become obsolete. If you manage a digital archive, you have to keep pace with this change. This requires human and financial resources, which are limited in every archive.

For this reason, the Museum of Communication currently prioritizes digitization of artefacts such as photographs and films, which deteriorate faster than stamps. But there's also good news: stamps are easy to preserve, explains Kessler. "If properly stored, they can survive several hundred years unscathed – longer than some short-lived digital data carriers."

Brave new world of stamps

Some Swiss stamps bridge the gap to the digital world by themselves: namely, Swiss Post's digitally enhanced stamps. To experience the colourful and eventful world behind these stamps, simply download the Post-App, scan the stamps and off you go!

swisspost.ch/post-app

“The stored image files are easier to organize and can be shared with others. Thanks to artificial intelligence, it may one day be possible to search the archives for specific themes or designs.”

Nicolas Kessler, historian

With Nicolas Kessler and Nora Haldemann, stamps are in good hands – whether in the stamp collection in Bern or the PTT archive in Köniz.

Urs Tester has been a dedicated conservationist for more than 30 years and heads the Biotopes and Species department at Pro Natura.

Photo: Nathalie Stöckli Collage: Kaspar Eigensatz

Goosebumps!

The new definitive stamps invite you to observe nature, an activity that is part of everyday working life for conservationist Urs Tester. Focus on stamps asked the biologist to tell us how the new designs make him feel – a spontaneous impression.

It takes Urs Tester just a couple of seconds to pick out the first design. He says the 1-franc stamp reminds him of a winter hike in the Jura: "There was an icy wind battering us, and the stream was frozen over. I still shiver when I think of that cold." As a member of Pro Natura's management team, he tends to spend a lot of time in the office in his day-to-day work, but he also gets out and about a lot: "I know quite a few beautiful places in Switzerland. But you don't necessarily have to go far – if you look closely, you can find nature's beauty right on your doorstep," says Tester, bringing out the 120 stamp, which reminds him of his garden. "Every year, swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on our fennel, and we get to watch them as they grow. It's always really fascinating." With their distinctive pattern, which resembles the shape of eyes, this species of butterfly is easy to recognize. And speaking of creepy-crawlies: "The spider on the 170 stamp must have been annoyed – the web was clearly visible because of the dew and didn't catch anything," says Tester, empathizing with the little hunter, before concluding his spontaneous reaction with this little morsel: "Did you know that not all spiders spin webs?"

Sustainable logistics

Nature and the environment are important to Swiss Post – including in its core market of logistics. That's why it is moving towards carbon-neutral delivery for all letters and parcels throughout Switzerland by 2030.

Find out here how it works:
swisspost.ch/sustainable-logistics

Technical information

Sales
Mint stamps philately/branches: from end of November 2023 until further notice
Philatelic products: from 29.2.2024

Validity Unlimited from 1.1.2024

Printing Offset,
CHF 1.20 Butterfly:
6-colour and Iriodin coating
Other stamps:
5-colour and Iriodin coating
Joh. Enschedé, Haarlem, Netherlands

Formats
CHF 1.00 Ice:
Stamp: 33 × 28 mm,
sheet: 180 × 380 mm (open),
180 × 95 mm (folded)
10 rows of 5 stamps
CHF 1.20 Butterfly:
Stamp: 33 × 38 mm,
sheet: 180 × 500 mm (open),
180 × 125 mm (folded)
10 rows of 5 stamps
CHF 1.40 Seedhead,
CHF 1.70 Spiderweb,
CHF 1.90 Moss,
CHF 2.00 Marble,
CHF 2.50 Plant oil,
CHF 3.10 Tree bark,
CHF 4.30 Sand:
Stamps: 33 × 28 mm,
sheets: 82 × 198 mm (open),
82 × 99 mm (folded)
5 rows of 2 stamps
Stamp booklets:
CHF 1.00 Ice:
183 × 62 mm (open), 75 × 62 mm (folded)
CHF 1.20 Butterfly:
183 × 84 mm (open), 75 × 84 mm (folded)

Paper White stamp paper with optical brightener, self-adhesive, on backing paper, 196 gm² (sheet) or 220 gm² (stamp booklet)

Perforation Serpentine cut (4 sides)

Design
Photography: Thomas Ruf, Muttenz (face values 100, 120, 190)
Martin Stünzi, Oberdürnten (face values 140, 170, 200, 250, 310, 430)

Discover more!
Scan them with the Post-App now, dive in and make the most of special offers!

Ice
Balls of ice in a stream,
Muttenz (BL)

Butterfly
Swallowtail,
Muttenz (BL)

Seedhead
Goat's beard,
Visperterminen (VS)

Spiderweb
Uetzikerried bei
Hombrechtikon (ZH)

Moss
Muttenz (BL)

Marble
Massa Gorge (VS)

Plant oil
Water mint, Ausliker-Ried,
Lake Pfäffikon (ZH)

Tree bark
Plane tree,
Niederuster (ZH)

Sand
Rhine Gorge, Versam (GR)

Set on first-day cover C6 (2 covers)

Products

Stamps (self-adhesive)

Sheets of 50 stamps
1.00 Ice
★ A523 361 / ⊙ A523 381 / *CHF 50.00*
1.20 Butterfly
★ A523 362 / ⊙ A523 382 / *CHF 60.00*

Sheets of 10 stamps
1.40 Seedhead
★ A523 363 / ⊙ A523 383 / *CHF 14.00*
1.70 Spiderweb
★ A523 364 / ⊙ A523 384 / *CHF 17.00*
1.90 Moss
★ A523 365 / ⊙ A523 385 / *CHF 19.00*
2.00 Marble
★ A523 366 / ⊙ A523 386 / *CHF 20.00*
2.50 Plant oil
★ A523 367 / ⊙ A523 387 / *CHF 25.00*
3.10 Tree bark
★ A523 368 / ⊙ A523 388 / *CHF 31.00*
4.30 Sand
★ A523 369 / ⊙ A523 389 / *CHF 43.00*

Stamp booklets of 10 stamps
1.00 Ice
★ A523 300 / ⊙ A523 800 / *CHF 10.00*
1.20 Butterfly
★ A523 301 / ⊙ A523 801 / *CHF 12.00*

Set
★ A523 150 / ⊙ A523 550 / *CHF 19.10*

Set of blocks of four
★ A523 160 / ⊙ A523 560 / *CHF 76.40*

Covers

Set on first-day cover C6 (2 covers)
⊙ A523 580 / *CHF 20.90*

Single stamp on first-day cover C6 (9 covers)
⊙ A523 600 / *CHF 27.20*

Block of four on first-day cover C6 (9 covers)
⊙ A523 630 / *CHF 84.50*

Unstamped cover C6
★ A523 700 / *CHF 0.90*

Folder/collection sheet A5

Set of 2 folder/collection sheets A5
★ A523 640 / ⊙ A523 650 / *CHF 20.70*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

A stamp in honour of the SHA's first mission

A symbol of humanity

This special stamp commemorates the first mission of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA). In 1974, a group of volunteers travelled to drought-stricken Chad, among them Jost Rüegg from Kreuzlingen.

It came about as follows: the formation of a disaster relief corps had been the subject of debate among the general public and policymakers for some considerable time. Until finally, in 1974, the corps rehearsed the emergency for the first time, when 80 trained volunteers were deployed in a major operation in the Lake Chad region (Niger, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon). The objective: to help the population cope with a terrible drought.

The SHA mission in the Lake Chad region in figures

- October 1974 to February 1975
- From 80 corps members to 50 at the end
- From 200 local helpers to 650 at the end
- 260 tonnes of local grain distributed to 8 supply points
- 5 large food warehouses built
- 15 hospitals and wards renovated, 3 of them newly built
- 14 wells renovated or newly tapped
- 1 river ferry built

Single stamp on first-day cover C6

About the SHA

The SHA is the operational arm of Switzerland's humanitarian aid efforts. The military corps is made up of 550 people ready for deployment, providing support in the event of a crisis with projects run by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and United Nations partners on the ground.

SHA media library
admin.media-flow.ch/50-skh-en#3765

Significant logistical resources were mobilized for the delivery of aid by land, air and sea.

An account of a humanitarian journey

50 years ago, when Jost Rüegg from Kreuzlingen read an appeal from the SHA in the newspaper, he was immediately motivated to go on a mission. He looks back on that time in this interview.

Travelling there
On the flight from Zurich to N'Djamena, we all sat together in rows in the cargo hold of a Douglas DC-3, very tense about what might await us.

First impression on the ground
Once we arrived, we couldn't start distributing the food straight away, because the ships with the vehicles from Switzerland that we needed were delayed. I was prepared for the fact that not everything would be highly efficient under difficult conditions.

Mission
We transported several tonnes of local grain by truck to a town called Mao, where there was a central warehouse. Later, we drove medical staff and medicines to the hospitals and transported bricks for the construction of an airstrip.

Challenges
To avoid getting stuck in the sand, we had to drive fast, which disrupted the sense of time that our local guides used to orient themselves. It made for some adventurous journeys.

Most memorable experience
There are plenty. But I was most impressed by the local people. Despite their difficult situation, they were confident, cheerful and on an equal footing in their dealings with us.

"I was most impressed by the local people."

Jost Rüegg

Products

Stamps

Sheet of 16 stamps
★ A521 111 / ⊙ A521 511 / *CHF 30.40*

Single stamp
★ A521 150 / ⊙ A521 550 / *CHF 1.90*

Block of four
★ A521 160 / ⊙ A521 560 / *CHF 7.60*

Covers

Single stamp on first-day cover C6
⊙ A521 580 / *CHF 2.80*

Block of four on first-day cover C6
⊙ A521 630 / *CHF 8.50*

Unstamped cover C6
★ A521 700 / *CHF 0.90*

Folder/collection sheet A5

★ A521 640 / ⊙ A521 650 / *CHF 2.70*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Technical information

Sales
Philately: from 29.2.2024 to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last
Branches: from 7.3.2024 to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last

Validity Unlimited from 7.3.2024

Printing Offset, 4-colour; Gutenberg AG, Schaan, Principality of Liechtenstein

Formats Stamp: 32.5 × 40 mm
Sheet: 162×190 mm
(4 rows of 4 stamps)

Paper White stamp paper, with optical brightener, matt gummed, 110 gm²

Perforation 13¼ : 13¼

Design Regina Vetter, Adliswil

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

Photos: Jost Rüegg, DDC

Send feelings

Whether you want to express congratulations or sympathy, there are moments in life that call for a letter. A new series of stamps sets the tone for your emotional messages before their reader has even opened the envelope.

Putting emotions into words – for example, in a letter – requires sensitivity. And work with your hands, from writing the letter and addressing the envelope to franking and posting it. The letter then also passes through other hands – those of the mail carrier who delivers it or of the recipient who reads it. Which is why hands, an apt accompaniment to emotional messages, feature prominently in the new designs. They can provide comfort, pass on a courtesy or a thank you and offer a toast to moments of celebration.

More than just a greeting

A new set of stamps for special events is issued every few years. This set offers stamps that demonstrate the sender's emotions before the reader even opens the envelope.

You can find lots of tips on writing letters and postcards, which you can then frank with these beautiful stamps appropriate to the occasion, on the following website: **swisspost.ch/write**

Set on first-day cover C6 (stamps from left to right: Comfort, Thanks, Congratulations)

Products

Stamps (self-adhesive)

Sheet of 10 stamps
1.20 Congratulations
★ A518 361 / ⊙ A518 381 / *CHF 12.00*
1.00 Thanks
★ A518 362 / ⊙ A518 382 / *CHF 10.00*
1.20 Comfort
★ A518 363 / ⊙ A518 383 / *CHF 12.00*

Set
★ A518 150 / ⊙ A518 550 / *CHF 3.40*

Set of blocks of four
★ A518 160 / ⊙ A518 560 / *CHF 13.60*

Covers

Set on first-day cover C6
⊙ A518 580 / *CHF 4.30*

Single stamp on first-day cover C6 (3 covers)
⊙ A518 600 / *CHF 6.10*

Block of four on first-day cover C6 (3 covers)
⊙ A518 630 / *CHF 16.30*

Unstamped cover C6
★ A518 700 / *CHF 0.90*

Folder/collection sheet A5

★ A518 640 / ⊙ A518 650 / *CHF 4.20*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Technical information

Sales
Philately: from 29.2.2024 until further notice
Branches: from 7.3.2024 until further notice

Validity Unlimited from 7.3.2024

Printing Offset, 4-colour;
Joh. Enschedé, Haarlem, Netherlands

Formats Stamp: 32.5 × 40 mm
Sheet: 100 × 228 mm (open),
100 × 114 mm (folded)
(5 rows of 2 stamps)

Paper White stamp paper, with optical brightener, self-adhesive, on backing paper, 196 gm²

Perforation Serpentine cut (4 sides)

Design Joel Burri, Zurich

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

Special stamp **100 years International Chess Federation**

AUSGABETAG – JOUR D'ÉMISSION – GIORNO D'EMISSIONE
7.3.2024 – 1000 LAUSANNE
GENS UNA SUMUS
100 Jahre Weltschachverband
100 ans Fédération Internationale des Échecs
100 anni Federazione internazionale degli scacchi
100 years International Chess Federation

Single stamp on first-day cover C6

Chess event with Lena Georgescu
On 13 March 2024, you will find a chess event and a special cancellation at the Bern 1 PostParc branch. Challenge the three-time Swiss chess champion to a flash game. You can learn about the rules and pick up some tips from the Bern chess club. It's an event for stamp and chess fans.

The detailed programme is available at swisspost.ch/stamps.

Speed interview with a chess master

A game that connects: millions of people all over the world play chess. Including Swiss champion Fabian Bänziger, who tells us in this brief interview what he finds so fascinating about it.

Fabian Bänziger, how did you get into chess?
I've always liked board games. I learned to play chess as a child during the school holidays, and I was immediately bitten by the bug.

What was it that fascinated you about it?
The different pieces and the combinations you can make with them. Now my fascination is mainly styles of play – whether someone's a bold or attacking player, for instance. It's also interesting to put yourself in the shoes of the person across from you, to think ahead and surprise them. In other words, to play unpredictably yourself.

What's your training regime like?
I practise for six or seven hours a day, solving various problems, playing against chess software or my coach over Skype. I sometimes also re-enact old games, such as from the 1980s, and analyse them.

What's the best way to learn chess?
There are many options available online, such as explanatory videos and websites. The advantage of playing online is that any mistakes you make are shown immediately, so you can quickly improve your game. Later on, you might feel like taking your chances in a club.

21-year-old Fabian Bänziger holds several national and international chess championship titles. © FIDE

With embossing

Products

Stamps

Sheetlet of 10 stamps
★ A520 311 / ⊙ A520 351 / *CHF 12.00*

Single stamp
★ A520 150 / ⊙ A520 550 / *CHF 1.20*

Block of four
★ A520 160 / ⊙ A520 560 / *CHF 4.80*

Covers

Single stamp on first-day cover C6
⊙ A520 580 / *CHF 2.10*

Block of four on first-day cover C6
⊙ A520 630 / *CHF 5.70*

Sheetlet on first-day cover C5
⊙ A520 590 / *CHF 13.20*

Unstamped covers C6 / C5
C6 (162 × 114 mm) / ★ A520 700 / *CHF 0.90*
C5 (229 × 162 mm) / ★ A520 701 / *CHF 1.20*

Folder/collection sheet A5

★ A520 640 / ⊙ A520 650 / *CHF 2.00*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Technical information

Sales
Philately: from 29.2.2024 to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last
Branches: from 7.3.2024 to 30.4.2025 or while stocks last

Validity Unlimited from 7.3.2024

Printing Offset, 5-colour + embossing; Cartor Security Printers, Meaucé-La Loupe, France

Formats Stamps: 28×33 mm
Sheetlet: 192×115 mm (2 rows of 5 stamps)

Paper White stamp paper, with optical brightener, matt gummed, 110 gm²

Perforation 13¼ : 13¼

Design Catherine Pearson, Lausanne

From the Swiss Post website

Under the Ring's spell

"The Lord of the Rings" casts a spell over many people. Including Kim Haldemann. Kim works in Sponsoring at Swiss Post and is a fan of the legendary works of J. R. R. Tolkien. The special stamps paying tribute to the fantasy author delighted her.

Find the story online:

Philately universe

Explore

A disturbing stamp collector

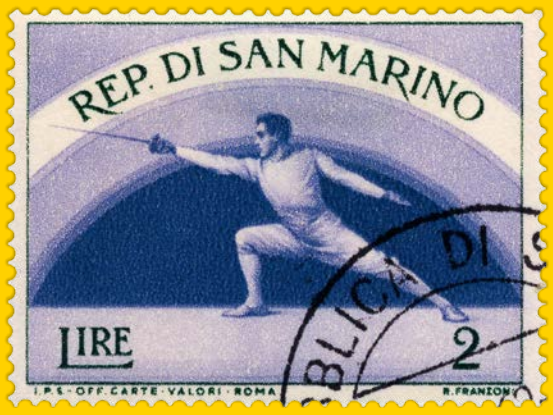
Successful French-language author Nicolas Feuz – also a prosecutor for the Canton of Neuchâtel – is publishing his 17th thriller, "Le Philatéliste" (The Stamp Collector). The book features a disturbing stamp collector who sets up a grim treasure hunt involving parcels. His signature? Postage stamps made of human skin. Available in bookshops and over 120 Swiss Post branches in Western Switzerland.

Images: iStock, Museum of Communication

Flashback

A centime makes all the difference

The “Poste Locale” stamp, issued in the Canton of Vaud in the year 1849, came in denominations of 4 and 5 centimes. The illustration shows a cancelled 5-centime stamp that was later altered to show a false denomination of 4 centimes. If the ruse hadn’t come to light, the collector’s value would have increased tenfold! The stamp can be found in the philately collection at the Museum of Communication in Bern.

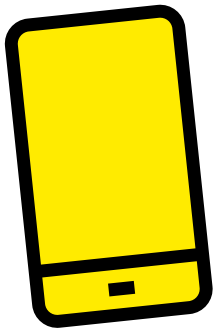


Tribute

Much sought-after

If you have a San Marino stamp in your collection, you can be a little proud, because these collector’s items from the small republic of just 61 square kilometres are very rare, making them much sought-after among philatelists. The microstate has a very long and very successful history of selling stamps covering a wide range of subjects (people, things, events), an important source of additional income for the country’s treasury.

Dialogue



Find us on social media

Swiss Post is active on the following social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube and X (previously Twitter). Follow us on our socials to keep up to date with all our news and reply to our posts. We’d love to read your comments!

Readers’ letters

Surprising, unusual, inspiring: share your philatelic discoveries with us, or simply tell us about your reactions as you read the magazine.

Write to us at:
redaktion.lupe@post.ch

We want to know!

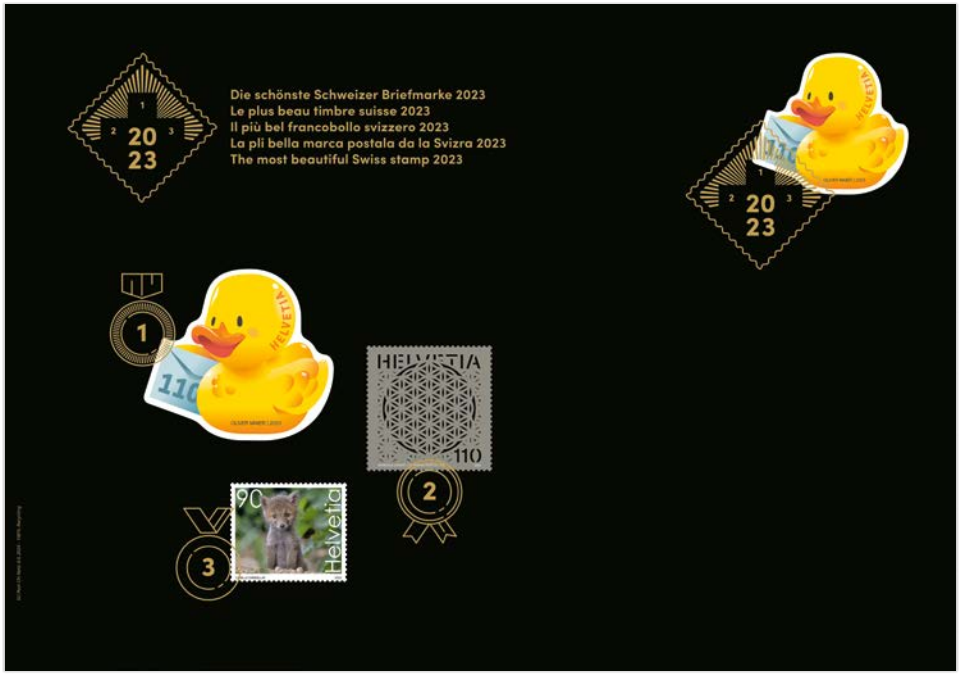
How do you like this new issue of Focus on stamps?

Tell us your views
at **redaktion.lupe@post.ch**

The most beautiful stamp of 2023

What's yellow and quacks?

The happy rubber duck in Swiss Post yellow brings letters and good news. It was named the most beautiful stamp of 2023, enjoying a comfortable victory in the public online vote held at swisspost.ch/stamps from 28 September to 10 December 2023. Second place went to the Flower of Life, with its legendary positive and peaceful energy. The "Fox" stamp from the "Cute animals" set claimed third place.


Die schönste Schweizer Briefmarke 2023
Le plus beau timbre suisse 2023
Il più bel francobollo svizzero 2023
La pli bella marca postala da la Svizra 2023
The most beautiful Swiss stamp 2023
2023
HELVETIA
110
Helvetia

Limited issue of 2023 items

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

Product

Most beautiful stamp of 2023

Special cover E6 (140 × 200 mm)
⊙ A514 990 / *CHF 9.90*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Christmas stamps 2024 – have your say!

As one Christmas passes, another one isn't too far away. Which designs would you like to see next Christmas? From 15 to 25 February 2024, you can cast your vote at swisspost.ch/stamps and win a great prize.

Stamp set for children

The mini Focus on stamps

The children's version of Focus on stamps again offers lots of fun with stamp friends Phila and Franco.

The stamp set for children is available at postshop.ch and all Swiss Post branches as a single issue for 12 francs or at a discounted rate on subscription at swisspost.ch/stamp-subscriptions.

Product

Stamp set for children

German / A524 901 / *CHF 12.00*
French / A524 902 / *CHF 12.00*
Italian / A524 903 / *CHF 12.00*

Technical information

Length: 20 pages

Contents: Four stamps valid for postage, two cancelled stamps, three postcards to colour in

Topics: Stamp collecting, puzzles, writing, comic, postal service knowledge, arts and crafts, recipe, gardening

Face values included: CHF 7.50

Publication: Four times a year

Suitable for: Children between the ages of seven and ten

Subscription:
swisspost.ch/stamp-subscriptions
or +41 848 66 55 44

Small, but impressive! Just like Focus on stamps, but a mini version for kids. The collection booklet in A5 format for girls and boys between the ages of seven and ten is published four times a year. In the set this time: four stamps valid for postage, two cancelled stamps and postcards to draw on. With their two friends Phila and Franco, young collectors will learn fascinating things about the world of stamps and Swiss Post and get creative ideas for arts and crafts and writing.

The focus in this issue: how did people actually write before paper was invented? To find out, Phila and Franco go back to ancient Egypt – to the era of stone tablets and hieroglyphics. The pair also celebrate the birthday of Swiss Post, which is 175 years old this year. Hip, hip, hooray: let the party for collectors begin!

Order using an order form or at postshop.ch

Important note

As the "175 years Swiss Post" anniversary stamps commemorating this occasion will be issued on 21 March 2024, the issue date for this set has been postponed from 7 to 21 March. Orders that also contain products from this issue will be sent together with this product on 21 March 2024. If you would like to receive the products in issue 1/23 earlier, please order them separately.

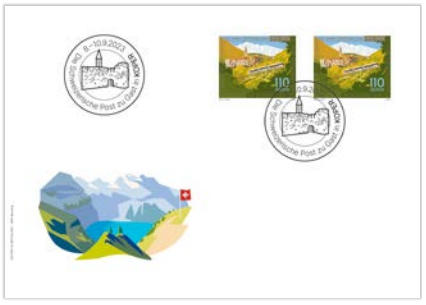
A small quantity surcharge of 9 francs will be charged for orders under 15 francs. Our subscribers will receive their delivery on 21 March 2024.

International stamp exhibitions 2023

Missed a philatelic event?

The exhibition covers issued especially for the trade fairs and sold exclusively on-site can now be ordered as a set. Swiss Post took part in the following exhibitions:

25 to 28 May 2023
33rd International Stamp Fair
in Essen (DE)



8 to 10 September 2023
Multilateral Stamp Fair in Koper (SLO)

26 to 28 October 2023
International Stamp Fair in Ulm (DE)

8 to 10 November 2023
Salon philatélique d'Automne in Paris (FR)

1 to 3 December 2023
Veronafil 2023 in Verona (IT)

Product

Set of 5 exhibition covers C6
⊙ A512 580 / *CHF 14.70*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Issuing programme

Anticipation is the greatest feeling

Issue date: 2 May 2024
Featured in: Focus on stamps 2/2024

1.20	**200 years Swiss Shooting Sport Federation (SSV)**
1.00	**100 years Einsiedeln World Theatre**
1.20	**100 years La Caquerelle–Lausanne special flight**
1.20	**Olympic Summer Games Paris 2024**
1.20	**150 years compulsory school**
1.20	**100 years Swiss Agricultural Technology**
	Pro Patria – The 5th Switzerland
1.00 + 50	Cultural ties
1.20 + 60	Sense of belonging
	EUROPA – Underwater fauna and flora
1.20	Lake Thun: Balchen, freshwater mussels and stoneworts
1.20	Doubs: Zingel asper, white-clawed crayfish and common water moss
	Summer
1.00	Barbecue with friends
1.20	Water relaxation

Subject to change.
As at: December 2023

2024 stamp catalogues

Zumstein stamp catalogue
Switzerland/Liechtenstein/UN Geneva 2024, German/French
★ A481 725 / *CHF 35.00*

Swiss stamp catalogue
Switzerland 2024, German/French
★ A481 787 / *CHF 27.00*

Colourful stamps

Everything your heart desires

Also great as a gift!

2023 year book

You can find all our products at postshop.ch

2023 year set with first-day covers (FDC)

2023 year set

Products

Issue set with single stamps 1/2024
The single stamps and sets in the 1/2024 issue are displayed on a free A5 backing card and protected with cellophane wrapping.
★ A526 150 / ⊙ A526 550 / *CHF 26.60*

Issue set with first-day covers (FDC) 1/2024
The first-day covers with single stamps and sets in the 1/2024 issue are combined in one free cover.
⊙ A526 580 / *CHF 32.00*

2023 year book
Representing a valuable record of our times, the year book presents all Swiss stamps and first-day cancellations for 2023, along with an exclusive black print, on over 100 pages in four languages (de/fr/it/en).
★ A491 830 / ⊙ A491 831 / *CHF 89.00*

2023 year set
All Swiss stamps for 2023, clearly laid out on four handy display cards with transparent protective sleeve.
★ A492 320 / ⊙ A492 820 / *CHF 75.25*

2023 year set with first-day covers (FDC)
All first-day covers in 2023 – including the single stamps, sets or miniature sheets with the respective first-day cancellations.
⊙ A492 530 / *CHF 109.15*

Key
★ mint / ⊙ cancelled

Pre-franked products

Prices have been increased slightly

From 1 January 2024, packs of 10 pre-franked envelopes and postcards will each cost 50 centimes more. We are raising the prices due to the increase in the VAT rate from 7.7 percent to 8.1 percent as of 1 January 2024 and the higher production costs caused by inflation and increased energy prices. In Focus on stamps 4/23, we communicated the previous prices.

Must-have of the year

Culture meets art:
Take a look back at 2023 with 51 original stamps and creative photos. Get your exclusive year book of Swiss stamps.

The ideal gift!

Available now in your nearest branch and at postshop.ch/yearbook